BLAZE ORANGE

The Outdoor Guide To Fort Drum

Fall 2006 Edition

Inside this issue:

Fort Drum is an active military installation. Recreational use is secondary to the military mission.

All recreationists are responsible for knowing the laws, regulations and procedures for recreational activities on Fort Drum.

Education Classes Are Mandatory For First-Time Hunters and Trappers

All first-time hunters and trappers must pass a safety/education course before obtaining a license in New York State. Courses are free-of-charge and administered by the NYSDEC. To find a course in your county, call the regional Sportsman Education office at (315) 785-2544 or check the NYSDEC website at: http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/sportsed/index.html

2006-2007 Fort Drum Recreation Permits Available By Mail!

Fort Drum is open to everyone for hunting, fishing, trapping, and other recreational opportunities. For the 2006-2007 season, Fort Drum Recreation permits can be obtained **by mail**. See page 4 for more details, and pages 5 and 6 for the permit application and hold harmless agreement.

Grouse & Woodcock Management on Fort Drum

Fort Drum's Fish & Wildlife Management Program is often asked: "Where are your food plots?" Food plots are typically a planted field of corn, oats, or other agricultural crop grown to provide food and cover for wildlife. Fortunately, on Fort Drum, the manipulation of native habitats can provide abundant natural food and cover without the costs associated with planted food plots.

Fort Drum's Fish & Wildlife Management Program has partnered with Fort Drum's Forest Management Program and the Ruffed Grouse Society to begin a cooperative, long-term effort to enhance biodiversity and manage early successional forests for the benefit of wildlife where and whenever suitable.

Early successional forests are often characterized by dense, young, seedling and sapling-sized trees. These trees are typically composed of shade intolerant species such as aspen and gray birch. These trees need a large amount of sunlight to grow and thrive. As these forests mature, the early successional species begin to reach biological maturity and start to die out of the forests. Concurrently, shade tolerant species, such as sugar maple, American beech, and yellow birch, that have been growing in the shaded understory begin to dominate the stand.

Historically, natural disturbances from fires, wind, beavers, drought, insect outbreaks, and ice storms created a mosaic of forest structure and ages within the landscape. Early successional forests and wildlife thrived. Periodic reversion of lands into young forests by Native Americans and early settlers also played an important role. More recently, however, fire suppression and other human interventions, as well as a decline in farming, has removed important disturbance regimes and allowed mature forests to dominate the landscape. (CONTINUED on Page 7)

Clearcut block in Training Area 14E as seen from Rte 3.

Questions? Call the Fish & Wildlife Management Program at 772-9636 or 772-4999.

GROUSE & WOODCOCK MANAGEMENT (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

As early successional habitat has decreased, so has the wildlife that typically depends on it.

In order to create and maintain habitat diversity, natural disturbance events must be mimicked. Forest management practices such as clearcutting, seed tree cuts or shelterwood cuts are techniques that simulate natural disturbance events. A well planned management action using one of these techniques is very cost effective and beneficial to the landscape.

One species that specifically benefits from this management is the ruffed grouse. This bird is dependent on disturbance, and its affiliation to early successional forests is readily apparent. Young seedling stage forests, alder stands, and forest openings provide important areas for young grouse chicks to forage for insects and seeds. Male grouse tend to use seedling-sapling stands for cover while attracting mates with their drumming, and older mixed stands provide a suitable fall-winter-spring food supply and nesting cover. If this mixture of forest stands and ages is not available, this bird will decline.

Ruffed Grouse (Photo ACGRP)

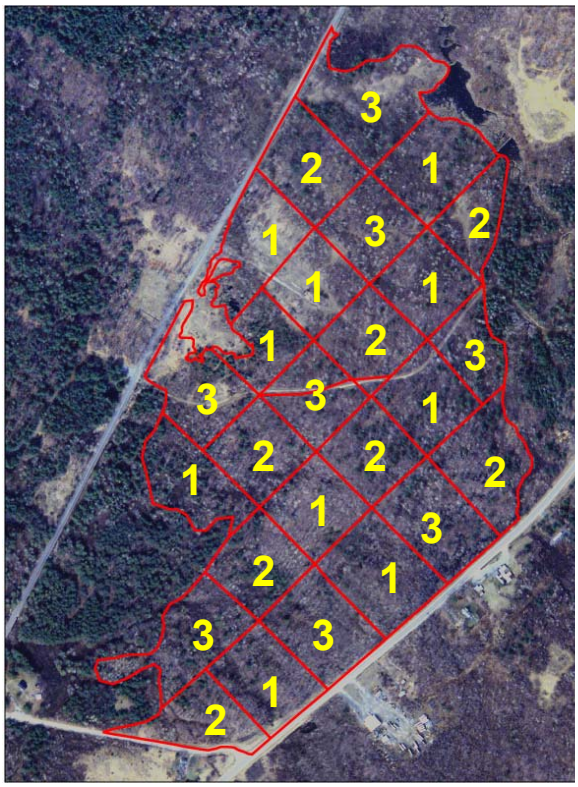
American Woodcock (Photo USFWS)

Besides ruffed grouse, many other species depend on young forests. One third of native mammals, such as, snowshoe hare, white-tailed deer, red fox, and bobcat, show preferences for early successional habitats. Other bird species such as American woodcock and chestnut-sided and golden-winged warblers are also dependent on early successional forests.

The Ruffed Grouse Society has over 40 years of experience improving woodland habitat to benefit early successional species. To take full advantage of this expertise, Fort Drum biologists entered into a formal Memorandum of Agreement with the Ruffed Grouse Society to promote, create, and sustain early successional habitat on Fort Drum.

Ruffed Grouse Society New England regional biologist Paul Karczmarczyk said, "RGS is excited to partner with Fort Drum, and in fact this partnership is one of only a few that exist between the Department of Defense and RGS and the first formal agreement that we know about." Karczmarczyk continued, "This is a great opportunity to work cooperatively to accomplish habitat management goals."

In the fall of 2005, the first management action took place in Training Area 14E, along the southeastern side of the installation along State Rte. 3. The management area is approximately 120 acres in size and one-third of the area was clearcut in blocks of 5 acres each. In 15-20 years, another 40 acres will be cut and in 30-40 years, the remaining 40 acres will be cut. Other areas in Training Areas 3 and 7 are being considered in the near future. In the next few months, a parking area and an educational kiosk will be constructed along Rte. 3 to explain the forest management actions that took place, and the importance of early successional management.



Aerial photo of the first management action in Training Area 14E. Areas marked with "1" have been cut in 2005 and 2006. Areas marked with "2" will be cut in 15-20 years. Areas marked with "3" will be cut in 30-40 years.

Fort Drum's Directorate of Plans, Training, Mobilization and Security has been very supportive of this effort, showing that training, natural resources, and recreation can coexist on a military installation.